

## **Stalinism: Russian and western views at the turn of the millenium**

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### **Abstract**

© 2005 Alter Litvin and John Keep. All rights reserved. Stalinism surveys the efforts made in recent years by professional historians, in Russia and the West, to better understand what really went on in the USSR between 1929 and 1953, when the country's affairs were shrouded in secrecy. The opening of the Soviet archives in 1991 has led to a profusion of historical studies, whose strengths and weaknesses are assessed here impartially though not uncritically. While Joseph Stalin now emerges as a less omnipotent figure than he seemed to be at the time, most serious writers accept that the system over which he ruled was despotic and totalitarian. Some nostalgic nationalists in Russia, along with some Western post-modernists, disagree. Their arguments are carefully dissected here. Stalinism was of course much more than state sponsored terror, and so due attention is paid to a wide range of socio-economic and cultural problems. Keep and Litvin applaud the efforts of Soviet citizens to express dissenting views.

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